

Unemployment and underemployment statistics for January – March 2019

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for January – March 2019) released today (April 18) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 2.8% in January – March 2019, same as that in December 2018 – February 2019. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.0% in the two periods.

Comparing January – March 2019 with December 2018 – February 2019, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) in different industry sectors varied, with a relatively notable increase observed in the foundation and superstructure works of the construction sector. Movements in the underemployment rates in different industry sectors also varied, but were generally small in magnitude.

Total employment decreased by around 6 300 from 3 866 700 in December 2018 – February 2019 to 3 860 400 in January – March 2019. Over the same period, the labour force increased by around 1 600 from 3 969 200 to 3 970 800.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) increased by around 7 900 from 102 500 in December 2018 – February 2019 to 110 400 in January – March 2019. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons decreased by around 1 400 from 40 300 to 38 900.

Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, said, "The labour market stayed tight in January – March 2019, with the unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) and the underemployment rate staying unchanged at 2.8% and 1.0% respectively."

"As to individual sectors, a noticeable increase in unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) was observed in the foundation and superstructure works of the construction sector when compared with the preceding three-month period (December 2018 – February 2019). On a year-on-year comparison, the unemployment situation improved in many major service sectors, notably in the retail, accommodation and food services sector on the back of sustained expansion in inbound tourism."

Looking ahead, Dr Law said, "The labour market is expected to remain largely stable in the near term. The Government will stay vigilant to how the evolving external uncertainties will affect the labour market going forward."

He noted that the Labour Department (LD) organises experience sharing sessions on employment of elderly persons and invites representatives of the

Hong Kong Federation of Insurers to brief employers on matters relating to the taking out of employees' compensation insurance policies for elderly employees. LD also stages large-scale thematic job fairs targeted at middle-aged and elderly job seekers and organises district-based job fairs on part-time employment at job centres to meet the needs of some elderly persons who are more interested in taking up part-time jobs.

On large-scale job fairs, LD will co-organise the Hong Kong International Airport Career Expo 2019 with the Airport Authority Hong Kong from May 31 to June 2 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. Ample vacancies involving the aviation industry and airport operation will be provided. LD will also organise the Kowloon East Job Fair from June 20 to 21 at the Yau Tong Community Hall and about 50 employers will participate.

Further information

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were compiled from the findings of the continuous General Household Survey.

The survey for January – March 2019 covered a sample of some 25 000 households or 74 000 persons, selected in accordance with a scientifically designed sampling scheme to represent the population of Hong Kong.

Data on labour force characteristics were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the sampled households.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization.

Detailed analysis of labour force characteristics is given in the "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" which is published four times a year. The latest issue of the publication contains statistics for the quarter October – December 2018 while the next issue covering the quarter January – March 2019 will be available by end May 2019. Users can download this publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp200.jsp?productCode=B1050001).

For enquiries about labour force statistics, please contact the Household Statistics Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).